



Social Media Gets the Green Light from the Fortune 100

By Kris Grant

Is your business ready to take the plunge into social media? John Moore says don't do it unless you are confident about your business, your product and services.

Moore, a social media expert, was the featured speaker at a daylong conference on social media held at the new Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center at San Diego State University. The conference was presented by the public relations firm Nuffer, Smith, Tucker in conjunction with the university.

Every business, said Moore, has a broken window, something that Malcolm Gladwell points out in his book, "The Tipping Point," and in his essays for *The New Yorker* magazine.

A company with too many broken windows will soon have people talking about them when it opens itself up on such social media outlets as Facebook, Twitter and via blogging. So, while he definitely encourages the plunge into social media, maybe the best place to begin, Moore suggests, is by looking at the internal organization.

"I'm sitting in a dentist's office chair and looking up and there's a stain on the ceiling tile," Moore said. "And I'm asking myself, can I trust this guy to fix my teeth? You can't control conversations. You can only spark conversations."

And that is why, explained Moore (whom many have dubbed the dean of Social Media), the most successful companies with an online fan base began the process of chatting with the outside world by going inside.

What social media is all about, in a nutshell, said Moore, is becoming a talkable brand. "The original social media has always been word-of-mouth. Clearly, what we're trying to get at is making our brand more

talked about."

In order to do that with credibility, Moore said the most successful companies employing a host of online social media strategies begin by examining from "inside out" the culture of a company.

advertising and public relations executives to students.

"Whole Foods and Starbucks went inside out and these were brands that grew because of evangelical customers," he said

Today word-of-mouth spreads faster



John Moore

From 1994 to 2004, Moore designed and implemented marketing programs for Starbucks and Whole Foods, and then set up his own consultancy firm, Brand Autopsy Marketing Practice. He also is active in the trade industry group, WOMMA, an acronym for Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association, for which he calls himself the "chief evangelist."

"Our job is to get customers talking, and talking in a fashion that is genuine and legally right," he said of the collective group of marketing professionals, ranging from

because of Social Media, he said. "And today, in corporate America, you must have social media in a marketing plan to get a project green lighted."

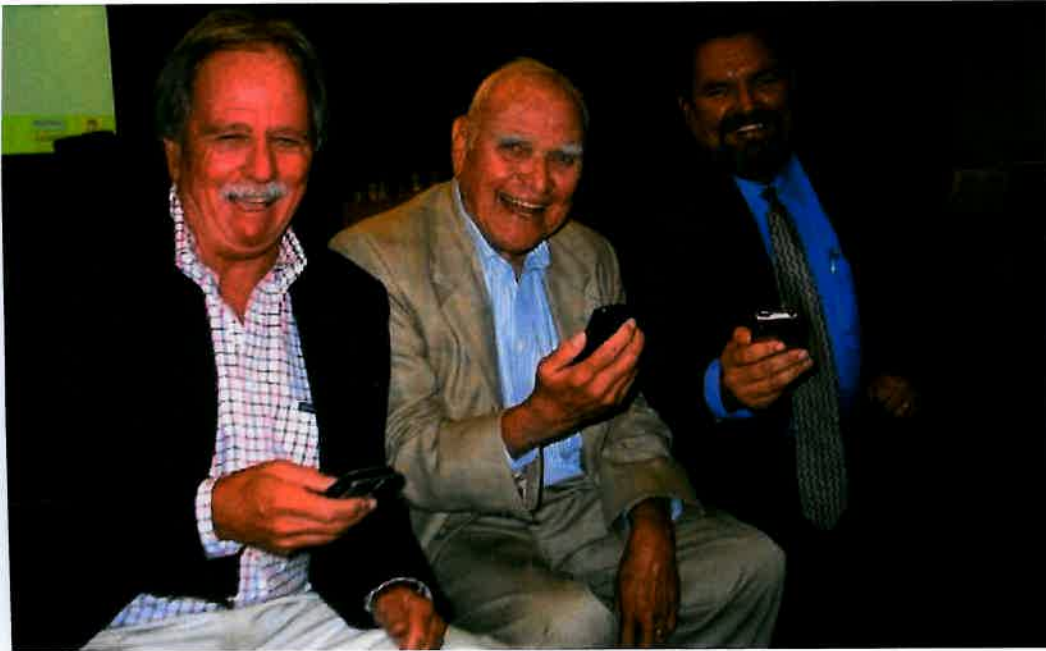
An industry report that Moore pointed to that came out this summer compared companies that are both deeply and widely engaged in social media and those that are not and found that those that are engaged in social media surpassed their peers in revenue and profit performance by a significant difference.

Moore said that 17 percent of the time

that people now spend online is spent navigating through social media sites. Of the Fortune 100 companies, 54 percent are on Twitter; 32 percent maintain a blog and 29 percent are on Facebook.

And the 69 percent of businesses on Twitter tweet about four times a week. "A lot of businesses are there but not doing much," said Moore.

Howard Schultz, Starbucks CEO, noted, "We were just named the No. 1 brand in a new social media engagement report. The key here is that we are connecting directly with our loyal customers who will be driving our future growth."



Kerry Tucker, Dave Nuffer, Bill Trumpfheller of PR firm Nuffer, Smith, Tucker.

Starbucks has 4.5 million fans, surpassing Coca Cola, on Facebook, Moore noted. Some of the social media strategies that Starbucks has employed, many of which are shown on Moore's Website at brandautopsy.com, include asking Starbucks "partners" (employees) to make short videos about their day-to-day life at Starbucks. The company now shares them at MyStarbucksStory.com.

Starbucks recently announced a new pastry line of products and invited only their online customers to their local Starbucks to enjoy a free pastry. "They were able to measure the participation," Moore said. "And while they were interacting with their customers, they're also able to tell them, 'Oh, did you know we open at 5 a.m.?' So there's a marketing message as well."

"People don't trust the advertising they

see," said Moore. "Seventy six percent of consumers believe companies are untruthful in their advertising."

Can you blame them, Moore asked as he presented two screens showing ads for delicious burgers at Arby's and Burger King, versus snapshots of actual products received at the two chains.

He cited a recent ad campaign for the drug Lipitor featuring Dr. Robert Jarvik. "The ad campaign presented him as a practicing doctor, but he's more a researcher," Moore said. "And then they show what he likes to do in his free time, like kayaking. And his friends said, 'Uh,

gee, I didn't know Rob liked to do all that stuff.' And it turned out it was a body double. People started talking about it in social media, and now a new campaign has replaced the Jarvik campaign."

On the flip side, 78 percent of global consumers say they trust recommendations from other consumers — it's a much more credible way to connect a business to consumers and consumers to consumers, Moore advised.

Moore said that studies show consumers are exposed to 5,000 marketing messages a day, which is why the most trusted messages become personal, what he terms the "Meg Ryan moments — 'I'll have what she's having.'"

"The most important marketing message is from a friend," said Moore. "This soda is delicious' is a very believable message."

The typical American takes part in 125 conversations per week that discuss products and services in everyday conversations, according to KellerFay Group, a marketing research firm. Of these conversations, 90 mention specific brand names. "We all want to be part of this topical conversation," Moore said.

Of these "conversations," 90 percent are offline, person-to-person, but 10 percent are happening online. Of the online conversations, 75 percent are person-to-person; 15 percent are texting and the remainder is social media. "This will increase," Moore said. "It's a growing field."

To harness social media, Moore said there is a basic three-stage process: Listen, learn, respond.

Responding is where businesses have enormous opportunities, Moore said. "Whole Foods does this very very well. They have 1.5 million followers on Twitter and do occasionally give out promotional messages but nine out of ten tweets respond to questions."

One of the smartest ways to use Twitter is to respond to what is being said about you, he advised. "And don't be afraid of criticism. It's great when someone has something negative to say. Because no matter how negative someone speaks about a business, at the heart of it is almost always a truth."

"Buzz does not create evangelists, Moore said. "Evangelists create buzz."

Many businesses ask the question, "Should we be online?" "Well, go online to find out if your customers are there," he urged. "If a brand has any charisma, someone somewhere is going to be talking about it. Guaranteed. There's a company named Fiskars. They make scissors. And, yes, people talk about it!"

Social media helps small companies look bigger and big companies look smaller, he says.

"Big businesses, small mom-and-pop shops are all using the same playing field," he said, noting that both reap rewards. "Smaller businesses will look bigger and more professional and big businesses can get smaller and have direct conversations with customers — a better way to engage with 'big brand.' It's a much better way to engage with the customer than when they call you on the telephone and are put on hold."

That's a whole other discussion. You can view that conversation at Moore's Website, too, on a blog post titled "Your call is (not that) important to us." ☞